part of the pack

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by sebootyslay

Summary

When Will started having nightmares, Hannibal thought a visit to the Baltimore State Hospital for The Criminally Insane would help him.

It did.

Notes

Hey!! Anyone remembered Peter? haha

Also, this series is small parts and ficlets of daddy Hannibal and baby Will's life

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal was reading on his bed when there was a knock on his door.

“Come in.” He said, lifting his head. The door pushed open and there he saw Will in his dinosaur pajamas, clutching a stag plush doll tightly in his hand. The six year old had only been with him for two months, but Hannibal had grown surprisingly fond of him. “Hello Will.” The boy loitered at the doorway, and Hannibal cocked his head. Will sometimes wouldn’t speak, and it takes a lot of persuasion and patience to coax him out of the space his head created him.

Will shuffled his feet, as if nervous. His blue eyes blinked as they gazed on Hannibal.

“Darling boy, come here.” Hannibal closed his book and extended his hand. Will finally entered, closing the door behind him and rushed to the side of the bed, pausing a while to climb onto the taller bed. Hannibal watched the child pushed himself onto the mattress, all the while holding the stag doll. As soon as Will is on, he shuffled closer to Hannibal. “Lie with me.” And Will did as he was told, slotting his smaller body in the crook of Hannibal’s arm, resting his head on Hannibal’s shoulders as his back curved and plastered his front against the man’s body.

“Was it a nightmare, Will?” a small nod. “What was it about?”

“Shadows.” Came a small whisper. “They look like wolves and they were growling at me.”

“What were they doing?”

“Gonna take me away.” Will shifted so that he hid his face in Hannibal’s chest. “Away from here. From you.” Hannibal played with the soft curls on the boy’s head.

“And why would they do that?”

“They think you’re a monster.” Came the muffled reply. Hannibal hummed. *Well,* he thought, *they’re not wrong*.

“Am I a monster, Will?”

“No!” Will’s head shot up to look at Hannibal, and the man realized that the boy had been holding his tears. His lips were puffy from being bitten and his eyes were red and glassy. “Never.”

“But you know what I do.”

“I don’t care.” He said stubbornly. Tears slowly fell, but the boy seemed to angry to care. “I like you.”

“As I you, darling boy.” Hannibal said fondly and cupped his cheek with one hand to wipe away the tears that fell down the cherub cheeks. “Now, no crying now. Do you wish to sleep here with me tonight?”

“Will you ask them to stay away if they come back?”

“I will make them stay away, precious boy.” Hannibal said firmly, and finally, Will smiled. He settled himself back down, and Hannibal pulled the covers on both of them, making sure Will is warm and protected from the chilly night atmosphere. Hannibal continued stroking through his hair until Will’s eyes drooped down and his breath evened out.

“I want you to meet someone today, Will.” Hannibal said after he sipped his coffee. Will wanted pancakes for breakfast, and Hannibal finds himself compelled to fulfill everything that the child wants. Will looked up from his food. His dining skills has improved greatly, and his utensils no longer scrape against the ceramic of the plate.

“Who?” he asked. Hannibal smiled.

“Finish your breakfast, and we will go see him.”

“Where is he?” Will asked as he continued to eat, making sure to speak only when he was done chewing.

“Baltimore State Hospital for The Criminally Insane.” Hannibal answered calmly. To his surprise, Will didn’t comment anything on it. Instead, he saw the boy lightening up at the mention of the hospital and ate faster. “Calm down now, he won’t be going anywhere. If you eat too fast you might choke.” He warned.

“Sorry, *tėtis*.” Will apologized, his tongue still awkward and in an accent as he continued eating at his normal pace. Hannibal nodded as he continued drinking his coffee, knowing that the accent will soon fade if Will frequented the word. After breakfast is done, Hannibal sent Will off to get ready as he cleaned and washed the plates. When he climbed upstairs, he already saw that Will had gotten out of the shower and is focusing intently on buttoning his shirt.

Hannibal is training Will to always dress impeccably neat and smart as he is, and he is pleased to see Will taking in the order in stride. Of course, it had been a field day of teaching Will how to button up shirts and put on shorts and suspenders, but Hannibal had proudly awarded Will ice cream for dessert that night as a reward for the boy’s good behaviour.

“Wait in the living room once you are done.” Hannibal said after he knocked on Will’s door. The boy let out an ‘okay’ before focusing back on his task. Hannibal shook his head fondly and returned to his own bedroom to get ready. Hannibal picked out a light blue suit for the day, knowing that if the person they were visiting sees any patterned clothing, it would trigger a small but still unpleasant headache.

When he was finished dressing, Hannibal went down to the living room to see Will there. The precious boy was on his knees at the cushioned windowsill, eyes trained on the birds chirping on the tree that grew tall next to their house. His hand was still clutching the stag doll, but Hannibal permitted it seeing that Will often feels calmer in the presence of the inanimate object.

“Will?” he called, and the boy turned to face him. “Time to go. Come now.” Will jumped off the sill and walked towards the man, taking his hand in his free one. They walked to the Bentley where Hannibal had already installed a toddler’s seat at the passenger’s seat of his car. Will sat still as Hannibal buckled him in.

Will broke the silence in the car as they were driving.

“Why is he in the hospital? Is he crazy?”

“He is mentally unstable.” Hannibal corrected him. “Also, he had committed a crime, although not serious. The FBI had deemed him too dangerous to just be released to the public, hence they incarcerated him.”

“In...carcerate?”

“It means to imprison him.”

“Is he a bad man?”

“Just a misunderstood one.” Will nodded his head and continued looking out the window.

“How do you know him?”

“I am treating him. I am a psychiatrist, after all.” They were no other questions after that. After another 10 minutes, they had reached the hospital. Hannibal registered them both at the reception, convincing the nurse there that Will would be completely safe going into a hospital filled with insane criminals. As they were walking, Hannibal stopped and picked up Will to let him sit on the waiting chairs. Will looked at the man curiously.

“Now Will,” Hannibal started. “Along the way there, you will hear many voices. Most of them are vile and horrific, and I worry about your gift.” He pulled something from the pocket of his coat. “Wear these earplugs for me. And cover your eyes with this.” It was a black sleep mask. Will tilted his head but let the man put it over his eyes. He gripped Hannibal’s arms once his vision is gone.

“*Tėtis*?” his voice quivered and Hannibal soothed him with a kiss to his forehead.

“Darling boy, I will hold you until we reach our destination. Do not be afraid.” Will slowly nodded his head and Hannibal fitted the ear plugs in him. Immediately the sounds of the outside world were muted. He felt familiar hands lifting him and he was brought to a chest. He instinctively hugged the stag doll close to him, his free hand gripping the coat of the man he is slowly considering to be his father. Fingers reassuringly stroked through his curls as Will rested his head on Hannibal’s shoulders, heartbeat calming down as he breathed in the familiar scent.

Feeling the boy now relaxed in his hold, Hannibal walked through the hallway, already knowing where to go. There were noises around him, but Will didn’t flinch one bit. Hannibal kept one hand to the boy’s hair in a gesture to calm him. When he reached the side garden where certain patients are allowed to roam, Hannibal glanced around. Other patients are quite

far away from the place he intended Will to meet the person, so he deemed it relatively safe. He set Will down and knelt in front of the boy. He first pulled the ear plugs out, and watched as Will process the sounds around him.

“We’re outside.” He said.

“Indeed.” Will’s nose twitched before a small smile crept up his lips.

“We’re in a garden.” Hannibal felt pride swell in chest at the boy’s sharp senses.

“Clever boy.” He praised. “I’m going to open the mask now.” Will hummed as he felt fingers gently pull the cover off his head. He had his eyes closed and when the mask was off of him, he slowly opened his eyes. His face scrunched at the sudden intrusion of light, but slowy his eyes adjusted. “Are you alright?”

“Uh huh.” Will said, blinking away the dark spots that danced in his vision. The light and colours slowly settled down. “Fine now.”

“Good. Come, Will.” He held a hand out and Will slotted his small ones into Hannibal’s larger hands. He let the man walk him to a small clove, the spot surrounded by low hanging trees and bushes and flowers. There, on the grass, was a man in a yellow suit. He had odd hair, brown eyes and thick facial hair. He was holding something in his hand, and the creature slipped in between his legs when the man noticed them walking towards him.

“Hello, Peter.” Hannibal greeted.

“H-Hello Doctor Lecter.” The man’s speech was stuttering, but Will could sense the relief and happiness in his tone.

“Peter, this is Will. He’s the boy I have been talking about.” Hannibal introduced him. “Will, this is Peter Bernardone. He is a friend.” Hannibal said. Will looked at the man, now at eye level since he was sitting cross legged on the grass. Peter at first avoided the eye contact, but Will came closer, and something in his eyes attracted Peter to them. He had never seen eyes as blue as Will’s.

“Hello Peter. My name is Will.” Will said and extended his small hand. Peter glanced at it before extending his own and shook hands with the six year old.

“H-Hi Will. M-m’name’s Peter.” He said, voice still shaky, but Will didn’t detect any fear in them. Will smiled. “W-what’s t-day’s session g-going to be ab-about?” Peter asked.

“I figured that since you did so well for our last session, I would just like you to spend time with Will today.” Hannibal took a seat on a nearby bench. “Will also has a penchant for animals.”

“Y-you do?” Peter’s eyes widened as he turned back to look at Will. The boy sat on the grass, and Hannibal allowed him to do this. Peter would feel more comfortable with a child. Children are open and more accepting than people ever give them credit for. Added with

Will's natural pure empath nature, Hannibal is certain that Will and Peter would go along well.

"I like dogs." Will said with a smile. "I like looking at the birds outside. One landed on my hand when I was playing yesterday. It was a beautiful bird."

"I-I want to show y-you som-something." Peter carefully revealed the creature in his lap, and Will gasped. It was a white rat. "H-his name's Kevin."

"Wow!" Will exclaimed in an excited voice and Peter put his fingers to his lips.

"S-shhh. They'll t-take him aw-away if they kno-know." Will's eyes widened as he nodded his head. His eyes drifted to rat who Peter let crawl all over him and his shoulder.

"He's so white, and his nose is pink." Will watched as Peter extended his arm, letting the rat travel down and walk on Will's thigh. He giggled as the creature climbed up his body and tickle his neck. "He's pretty."

"He speaks to m-me. Kevin." Peter said as he wrung his hands together. "P-people say that ma-makes me crazy."

"Why would it?" Will sat closer to Peter, both of his knees touching Peter's. Hannibal noticed this with a surprised stare. Peter wouldn't let anyone touch him, and it took a month of slow coaxing and building trust so that Hannibal could even touch his shoulder. Well, he should be surprised at the fact that Peter even accepted a handshake from Will. Indeed the boy is remarkable, Hannibal noted with small smile.

"Th-they can't hear him." Peter said as he watched the rat circulate from walking on him and back on Will. "I can hear 'im."

"I don't think you're crazy." Will said bluntly. "That's amazing, actually." Peter's shaky smile widened at the boy. Will was genuinely amazed at the man in front of him. "I can hear voices too. I mean, I can hear your voice, but I can *hear* what you think."

"Re-really?"

"Yeah." Will smiled as he focused on Peter. "You're sad." Will said with a slight frown. "Why are you sad?"

"Th-they wouldn't let me bring my animals h-here." Peter said sadly. "I feel... lone-lonely, y'know?" Peter stroked Kevin's furry back. "C-can't talk to an-anyone here."

"I'm sorry." Will's eyes droop in sympathy. "I've felt lonely before. It's not nice." Peter nodded his head, agreeing. "You have Kevin now, so at least you have him."

"Ke-Kevin's nice to m-me." Will smiled. "Wh-what else d'you h-hear? In m-me?" Peter sounds a little timid to ask, but he did. Hannibal listened closely. This is the first time he had ever seen Will's emphatic nature on another person besides him, and it intrigues him to see how far Will's ability to be emphatic stretch.

“I can hear... something shaky.” Will’s voice wavered. He felt a sudden sadness creep into him, and tears watered in his eyes. “Guilt.” Peter looked down, as if ashamed.

Kevin squeaked as he ran and hid in the nearby bushes. Peter didn’t chase him and let Will stand up. To his surprise, the boy hugged him, arms tight around his neck. The boy started crying on his shoulder to Hannibal and Peter’s shock. Slowly, Hannibal saw Peter’s hand shaking as well as he embraced the boy back. The man slowly cried as well, finally feeling someone who understood him.

Someone who managed to reach deep into him and feel the same as he did.

They cried and held each other for a while, Peter letting Will settle on his lap to better hug him. Peter let his sadness envelope him, pulled from the strong calling of the boy on his knee. Will had never felt this much sorrow in his heart. He doesn’t know why he felt it. At one point he was trying to read Peter, and the next, he felt this tug and his chest contracted painfully, tears collecting in his eyes.

“Th-thank you.” Peter said through his sobs. Will didn’t say anything, he just sat there, trying to stop himself from crying. His head laid on Peter’s shoulders. “N-No one ev-ever felt wh-what I felt.”

“I’m sorry that you have to feel that alone.” Will said to his neck. He felt a shaky hand at his hair, and he sighed encouragingly. Peter slowly stroked his hair, fitting his fingers through the boy’s soft curls and felt himself slowly calming down.

At the side, Hannibal watched in utter amazement at the sight before him. Not only did Will managed to read Peter, he had managed to feel whatever sadness Peter kept in his heart. He had understood Peter in ways that Hannibal could have never did. Peter had opened up to him so easily, and when Will reached that part of him, he had broken down and seek for assurance. The wonderful boy reciprocated with his embrace, and Hannibal for once saw Peter hug and hold something close to him that was not an animal.

Such an amazing, precious boy.

“I think we scared Kevin.” Will said after his sniffling subsided. Peter laughed, a first, unshaken laugh.

“I g-got hit in the-the head.” Peter suddenly said. “A h-horse did it t-to me. Wasn’t her fault. She was just sc-scared.” Will nodded his head, not lifting it from his resting place on Peter’s shoulders. Both of them felt a tranquility that Peter had never felt before. “An-animals ca-can’t think, ya know? Only act-act on in-instinct. An-animals can’t be m-mean. Only h-h-human’s can.”

“Someone was mean to you.” Will said softly.

“Uh huh. I th-thought he w-was a fr-friend.” Peter’s voice was sad, and Will felt an impulse to tightened his hug. “H-he killed people... who-who tried he-helping me.”

“He’s horrible.”

“An-and he b-blamed me f-for it.” Peter sniffed. “N-No one be-believed me ex-except for Doc-doctor Lecter.” At his name, Will lifted his head and looked at Hannibal’s direction. A small smile was on his lips, as if he wanted to say thank you to Hannibal for believing the man.

“Did they catch the man?”

“Uh huh.” Peter nodded. “I-I kind off put h-him in a h-horse. I w-wanted him to f-feel t-the pain.” Will pulled away to look at Peter’s eyes. As Peter gazed back, he saw how honest and genuine Will’s blue ones looked. He saw no judgement, no resentment or even fear at the man’s admission to a horrific act.

“I’ve read about things like that when I was at the place where *tėtis* worked.” Will tilted his head. “Rebirth?”

“W-wanted him to c-come out a n-new man.” Peter said and sniffed.

“But he didn’t.” And Peter nodded to that. “Don’t be sad. I guess bad men will always be bad men.” Will was quiet for a while. “I have nightmares.”

“M-me too.”

“I have shadows of wolves. They want to take me away.” Will gripped Peter’s yellow suit. “They scare me.”

“An-animals don’t d-do t-things unless they th-think they’re ri-right.” Peter said. “S-sometimes t-they attack w-when they feel thr-threatened. Predators li-like wolves d-do that.” Will laid his head on Peter’s shoulder again, head whirring at the fact.

When it was time to part, there was another water show. Hannibal had to coax the child gently to let go of Peter as visiting time was almost over. His session with Peter had ended hours ago, but he stayed there, content to watch the boy interact animatedly with Peter. It was the first time he saw both of them so relaxed. Peter laughed and conversed with the boy like he had no worries in the world and Will had talked and entertained the man, his sweet voice like music in Hannibal’s ears. The man had passed the time sketching the two of them.

Peter also seemed reluctant to part from the boy, but had caved in when Hannibal gifted the sketch to the man, promising next week on his next session, he’d bring along a frame so that Peter can keep it safely. Will sniffed as he hung on Hannibal’s neck, cheeks smushed against the man’s shoulders, ear plugs already in. As they walked away, Will waved sadly at Peter, and the man waved back with an equally sad smile, Kevin peeking from the collar of his shirt. When they reached the entryway to the building, Will let Hannibal slip the eye mask on. Will slept during the journey home, no doubt exhausted from the day’s events.

He was quiet during dinner, but Hannibal noticed his quiet wasn’t because he had retreated so far back in his mind. He was aware of his surroundings. Instead, his quiet was a calming sort, as if he had reached a silent understanding with himself and his surroundings. The atmosphere was tranquil and calm. Hannibal had read him a story as they wait for bedtime, seated on his leather armchair with Will on his lap. It was a story of Confucius and his

students who trekked through a waterfall. It was story on how a man survived a fall from the top of the waterfall by following nature and not fight it. He felt Will's head drooping from its position on his shoulder, a sign that he was asleep. He closed the book and kissed the top of Will's forehead.

"*Tėtis?*" the boy called silently.

"Yes, darling boy?"

"Can I sleep with you tonight?" he asked.

"Of course." Hannibal helped Will get ready since the boy was already too sleepy to even walk properly. They got ready for bed, and Hannibal switched the lights off. He noticed Will no longer flinching at the dark and pulled the blankets over them. Will was curled to his side, and soon, Hannibal too let sleep take him.

He was awoken by slight movements on his side. He peeked an eye open to see Will sitting up, staring at the dark wall in front of them.

"Hello." He heard Will said. There was no one there, Hannibal knows, or not he would have sensed it. He figured Will is sleep talking, but he stayed still and made no attempt to wake up. "Wow, there are more of you today." He heard Will laugh nervously.

Something clicked in Hannibal's head. Will is talking to wolves in his nightmare.

"Are you coming to take me?" Will asked the shadows. There was no reply, of course there isn't, but Hannibal supposed that the wolves had answered the boy's question because Will replied again. "My friend Peter said animals only act like that when they feel threatened." Hannibal saw Will's head tilt in the dark. "Are you threatened?"

Silence.

"Are you threatened by *tėtis*?" Will asked. Hannibal felt a small hand on his covered ones under the blanket. "I like *tėtis*. He helped me a lot. You don't have to feel threatened." There was silence again and Will laughed, as if amused to whatever the wolves were telling him. "*Tėtis* won't hurt me." He said. "If he had wanted to, he would have left me at my old home."

Hannibal almost smiled. Smart boy.

"Thank you for worrying." Will said. "You kept me safe from Dad before, but I am safe now with *tėtis*. No one will hurt me again." There was silence before he felt Will crawl off the bed. Hannibal, through the slits of his eyes, saw Will standing in the middle of the dark room. "Bye bye." He said. He then walked over to the window and placed his small hand there. "Will you come back when I am scared?" he asked the windowpane. There was a silence. "Thank you."

Hannibal supposed that the shadows said yes.

He then felt Will crawl back up the bed and quickly closed his eyes back. The boy snuggled against him, and Hannibal let his hand lift up to hug him back. Will let out a relaxed sighed and Hannibal felt the boy slowly drifting off back to sleep.

Hannibal didn't mention the incident last night to Will tomorrow morning. He had noticed though, that the boy was more open to him, smiled more and laughed more. He was working on his notes one day when Will came into his home office, a piece of paper in his hands. He handed it to Hannibal. It was a crude, child's drawing of a pack of wolves. They are all black with yellow eyes, coloured in crayon.

"Who are they, Will?"

"The shadows." Will said. "They weren't always bad. They helped me." Hannibal hummed as Will climbed onto his lap. He let the boy settle down comfortably before curling an arm over his waist.

"Were these the shadows that you had nightmares off?"

"Uh huh. But I made them go away." Will said as he closed his eyes, intending to take a nap on his father's lap. "They'll come back if I call them. I said I was fine."

"Why did they come, Will?"

"They thought I was being hurt. By you." Will yawned, closing his mouth with the back of his hand. "I said to them that you wouldn't. I hugged them goodbye and they left." Hannibal laughed gently as he placed the drawing on his table and kissed Will's head.

"Well, you're right. I wouldn't hurt you, and I wouldn't let anything hurt you as well." There was no reply, and Hannibal was sure that the boy had fallen asleep. He turned let himself lean back onto his chair, fingers playing with Will's curls.

Sweet, precious boy indeed.

End Notes

Comments and kudos fuel my being! Thank you for those who read!

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